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**OWNER OF BRONX BAIL BOND FIRM PLEADS GUILTY
TO FEDERAL MONEY LAUNDERING CHARGE TIED TO DRUG CASE**

JAMES B. COMEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced today that ROBERT BERRETTA, the owner of Associated Bail Services ("ABS"), a bail bonding business located in the Bronx, pled guilty late today in White Plains federal court to money laundering in connection with a corrupt bail bond arranged by BERRETTA and others in a Westchester County narcotics case.

According to the guilty plea proceedings and the Indictment, in August 1997, Marcos Gonzalez was arrested on state drug charges in Yonkers in connection with the seizure of 74 kilograms of cocaine, and was held without bail. In March 1998, a Westchester County judge ordered Gonzalez released on a \$250,000 cash or insurance bond. International Fidelity Insurance Company ("IFIC") posted the bond on March 24, 1998 to secure Gonzalez' release. The bail documents indicated that the insurance bond was arranged by BERRETTA, who was an authorized representative of IFIC in its insurance bonding business.

According to the terms of the bail, IFIC would be responsible for paying the \$250,000 bond in the event Gonzalez failed to comply with the terms of his release, including appearing in court. As alleged in the Indictment, the IFIC bond was allegedly secured by certain collateral, including a residence owned by JOSEPHINE TUSANEZA at 274 Park Hill Avenue in Yonkers, which IFIC would have the right to seize in the event that IFIC was required to forfeit the \$250,000 bond it had posted. Marcos Gonzalez ultimately was released on bail after IFIC posted the insurance bond.

According to the guilty plea and the Indictment, however, BERRETTA and the other defendant had a secret arrangement regarding the Marcos Gonzalez bail bond. Victor Gonzalez, the brother of Marcos Gonzalez and the alleged head of a major cocaine trafficking organization in New York, delivered a total of \$275,000 in cash drug proceeds to ABS between January and March of 1998. BERRETTA, during his plea allocution, admitted that cash drug proceeds had been delivered to ABS to secretly secure the \$250,000 IFIC insurance bond. BERRETTA also admitted that during March and April 1998, he and other ABS employees, including DANIEL GONZALEZ and ORLANDO VALLE, used some of that cash to purchase a large number of money orders, and that they then deposited cash and money orders into BERRETTA'S business account. The Indictment also alleges that in March 1998, Victor Gonzalez secretly paid TUSANEZA approximately \$250,000 cash in exchange for TUSANEZA's agreement to pledge her

property located at 274 Park Hill Avenue in Yonkers to make it appear as if the property was to be used as legitimate collateral for the \$250,000 insurance bond posted by IFIC.

Court records indicate that in June 1998, Marcos Gonzalez failed to appear in court, and is currently a fugitive. As a result of Gonzalez's failure to appear, IFIC was required to forfeit the bond and pay \$250,000 to Westchester County.

BERRETTA, a resident of Yonkers, New York, faces a maximum of 20 years in prison and a fine of at least \$500,000. He is scheduled to be sentenced by United States District Judge ALLEN G.SCHWARTZ on April 18, 2003.

DANIEL GONZALEZ and ORLANDO VALLE previously pled guilty to the same charge money laundering charge. GONZALEZ was sentenced to over four years in prison. VALLE is scheduled to be sentenced later this month. The remaining defendant, JOSEPHINE TUSANEZA, is scheduled to be tried on the money laundering charges beginning February 3, 2003.

Mr. COMEY praised the efforts of the Internal Revenue Service and the Drug Enforcement Administration in this investigation.

Assistant United States Attorney BART G. VAN DE WEGHE is in charge of the prosecution.